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FARM WOMEN'S CAMPS COMBINE STUDY AND RECREATION

A radio talk by Miss Gertrude Humphreys, State Home Demonstration Agent, Morgantown, West Virginia, delivered during the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, August 1, 1934, and broadcast by a network of associate NBC radio stations.

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If you have the feeling that you'd like to forget your everyday worries and be with a group that radiates optimism, good fellowship, and a sincere desire to learn, you probably show symptoms of needing to attend a farm women's camp.

Through the extension service of the state colleges of agriculture many such camps are made available each year to the rural women of the United States. A typical camp of this sort--the one with which I happen to be most familiar--is that held in West Virginia.

At this time next week the 13th annual West Virginia camp will be in full swing at Jackson's Mill. The fact that the attendance and interest in this annual event has steadily increased from year to year, indicates that farm women are eager for the planned instruction and recreation that such a camp offers.

Perhaps you are wondering just how these farm women pass the time in camp. Of course, some of them come simply for a rest and a change, some come as club representatives to get help and instruction along a definite line for the club at home, some come just for fun and recreation, and others are there not to miss a thing that happens from early morning until late at night. All of these groups are kept in mind when the camp program is planned.

For those who want to get new ideas for their homes and communities, there is a wide choice of discussion groups or classes with capable leaders in charge, from which each camper may select the subjects in which she is most interested. For instance on one cottage porch is a group discussing how to better understand and better train their children; in another cottage the campers are looking through book after book and reading snatches here and there as they discuss the value of each book or magazine for the home library; gathered about a table is another group with pencils moving rapidly back and forth across notebooks jotting down ideas and suggestions that will help these homemakers to be better buyers, and better managers of the family pocketbook; out along a woodland trail the naturalist is kept busy answering question after question about plants, insects, and birds. Many other groups about the camp grounds are just as busy studying and discussing the problems that are most important to them.

As a result of the ideas gotten from the class in remodeling clothing at state camp last year, one woman reports that she has been able to transform three old dresses and an out of date coat into becoming 1934 models. She says that the saving made from this class alone is more than enough to pay her expenses to several state camps.

Each day there are lectures and demonstrations for the whole group. These, as well as the small group discussions, are planned to tie in with the yearly

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program of work for the county and community extension organizations to which the campers belong. They can then go home prepared to help build up and add to the program that is already in action.

You are thinking no doubt that this sounds as if the camp is all work and no play, but don't let that worry you for an instant. For each day and each part of a day there is recreation, active games, quiet games, music, swimming, afternoon teas, parties, council fires, stunts, plays -- in fact most all kinds of activities that are mentally and physically refreshing.

In the cool of the day just before sundown the campers stroll leisurely down through the camp grounds for vespers. The knoll overlooking the flower garden near the old mill standing since the days of Stonewall Jackson, makes an ideal setting for this service. To many of the women this is one of the most cherished parts of the camp activities.

This camp program combining instruction, inspiration, and recreation reaches out to influence hundreds of farm homes throughout the State. Each year there is a new group of campers, many of whom are having their first vacation in twenty, thirty, or even forty years. Then there are campers who come as regularly as the camp is held. Five women have attended every camp. Many others have attended for 9, 10, and 11 years. These women have become some of our best local leaders and most loyal workers in helping to interest other homemakers and other communities in the work of the farm women's clubs and 4-H clubs.

On the closing day of camp when the baggage is all packed, and faces turned eagerly toward home, the parting words of the campers come almost as a chorus "My, I haven't had such a good time since I was a girl!"

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